



San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$500,000 GRANT CHALLENGES SAN DIEGO TO BUILD A JUSTICE CENTER FOR FAMILIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*San Diego Family Justice Center will become the first of its kind in the nation!
The California Endowment presents Grant to City Officials & Community*

San Diego, CA- The California Endowment's \$500,000 grant challenges San Diego to come together to support the City's vision to create the "San Diego Family Justice Center" which promises to be the most comprehensive center in the nation for victims of domestic violence. The Center will be the first in the country to house the entire Domestic Violence Units of the Police Department and City Attorney's Office, while also housing victim and legal advocates, forensic medical professionals, prevention specialists, probation officers, and a host of other professionals and social workers who work with victims of domestic violence. It will initially centralize, under one roof, about 100 domestic violence professionals whose goal it will be to improve the criminal justice process for families and help these families break the cycle of violence. The grant was presented today to the City of San Diego by Robert K. Ross, M.D. President and CEO of The California Endowment.

"By improving the coordination of services for these victims, we can reduce the number of cases that go unreported and ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted," said Dr. Ross. "The Endowment is pleased to support the Center and partner with the non-profit and government leaders who took the lead on this innovative project that will improve the health and well-being of families living under these intolerable circumstances."

The current system makes it difficult for victims to seek help and unintentionally wears them down because domestic violence professionals and services are scattered throughout the city and county. San Diego

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\$500,000 Grant

City Attorney Casey Gwinn first envisioned the idea of a one-stop shop for domestic violence professionals and services back in 1989 when he was a young prosecutor working in the trenches. In those days, domestic violence was not taken seriously by the criminal justice system. Today the City Attorney and the Police Department each have specialized domestic violence units. “Our job is not done. We still have a long way to go until we reduce domestic violence incidents, recidivism and homicides,” said Gwinn. I am grateful for the financial support we have received from The California Endowment, the Mayor, and City Council members Toni Atkins and George Stevens.”

Mayor Dick Murphy accepted the \$500,000 grant on behalf of the City of San Diego. “I want to thank The California Endowment for this generous grant that will help victims of domestic violence. It puts us one step closer to meeting my Goal #8 which is to make San Diego America’s safest city,” Mayor Dick Murphy said. “As a former Superior Court Judge, I believe simplifying the criminal justice process helps families who suffer through the pain of domestic violence.”

Each year the Police Department documents about 11,000 domestic violence incidents within the city of San Diego and law enforcement agencies in the County of San Diego document another 15,000 domestic violence cases. In 1999, shortly after he was confirmed San Diego Police Chief, David Bejarano embraced the vision to create the San Diego Family Justice Center. In the last three years, community forums, focus groups, and strategic planning meetings have been held on the issue of creating a Family Justice Center. A feasibility study was conducted by the San Diego Police Department. Police Chief David Bejarano said, “Victims of domestic violence have a difficult time just dealing with what has happened. They look to law enforcement and other governmental agencies for some assistance in getting through it. This Center will provide a convenient helping hand.”

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\$500,000 Grant

Last October, Gwinn and Assistant Police Chief Rulette Armstead presented the revolutionary plan to the San Diego City Council's Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee. Chair and Council member Toni Atkins and committee members unanimously approved the proposal which will be presented to the Mayor and City Council next month. "Children who are victims or witnesses of domestic violence suffer scars that do not heal on their own. The San Diego Family Justice Center will provide help for children as they go from the first to the last step of the healing process. We need to break the cycle of domestic violence, and we need to start with our children."

Community members also spoke out in support of the Center. Dr. George McClane said, "As a doctor I also know that domestic violence results in millions of dollars in health care costs, and over 175,000 work days per year are lost due to domestic violence. That is why I am most excited about the forensic/medical unit that will be a part of the vision of the Family Justice Center. This is not being done anywhere in the nation and San Diego has the opportunity once again to provide leadership and save lives. The Family Justice Center is good medicine for San Diego."

The Center for Community Solutions, which offers restraining order clinics, is one of many organizations that will be housed at the Center. Verna Griffin-Tabor said, "On behalf of the San Diego Domestic Violence Council and the Center for Community Solutions, we applaud the efforts of our community leaders and The California Endowment for investing themselves and their money for this very important cause. Domestic violence is everyone's issue. Domestic violence affects men, women and children."

Currently, there are two phases to the San Diego Family Justice Center. Phase one seeks \$3-million to sustain the project for four years at 707 Broadway in downtown San Diego. The ultimate dream is a permanent site which will allow expansion of community services and other governmental agencies. The approval of Phase I of the Justice Center will be docketed before the City Council on April 9, 2002. If the Council approves the Justice Center proposal on April 9th, the Center could be in operation by July, 2002.

Today's news conference was held at City Hall in downtown San Diego. Also in attendance were San Diego Deputy Mayor George Stevens and Council members Ralph Inzunza and Byron Wear. In addition, two survivors of domestic violence also spoke in support of the Center. For more information about the San Diego Family Justice Center visit the following website: www.sandiegodvunit.org.

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